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# FINE ART IN BULGARIA

*Supplement to "Bulgaria of To-day"*

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# FINE ART IN BULGARIA

## I

### FOREIGN ARTISTS IN BULGARIA

THE liberation of Bulgaria, which was not the result of the sole efforts of the Bulgarian nation, brought about a radical change in the life of the people, and profoundly altered the interests and the activities of the educated classes.

Whereas before the creation of the Principality the chief object of these classes consisted in the intellectual awakening of the Bulgarian nation, with the advent of political freedom, secured through pressure of European and mainly English public opinion and by foreign military intervention, the almost exclusive attention of the Bulgarian Governments and of the national leaders was directed towards the political and economic uplifting of the oppressed "rayas" of yesterday. All that was undertaken for the intellectual advancement of the people during the first years after the liberation was limited to the organisation of primary and secondary education. Nor could it be otherwise so long as the needs of the country in that respect continued to be the most keenly felt. While there was still a lack of trained men for the various governmental and municipal services, any suggestion for patronising or encouraging the fine arts would certainly have been left unheeded and relegated to the domain of pious wishes.



This was felt not only by the different Bulgarian Governments but even by those who, before the liberation of Bulgaria, had devoted themselves to the cultivation of the fine arts, and among whom the most prominent name is that of Nicolas Pavlovitch (born in Sistova in 1835 and died in Sofia in 1849). Abandoning commerce, Pavlovitch had graduated with great success at the academies of fine art in Vienna (1856) and Munich (1859), and, after visiting the various museums in Dresden and Prague, had exhibited during 1860 in Belgrade, the then centre of Bulgarian emigrants and revolutionaries, two pictures whose subjects had been suggested by ancient Bulgarian history. He then went to St. Petersburg and Moscow, where, as he puts it, "the inhabitants are not entirely absorbed in commerce and money-making, but have an interest in the fine arts and are given to intellectual pursuits." In 1861, however, we find him back in his native country, where he endeavoured, by means of his lithographs and pictures of subjects both ancient and modern, to stimulate his compatriots to political and intellectual life. He also tried to reform and modernise church painting in accordance with the requirements of the latest artistic technique, and made two unsuccessful attempts at opening a school of painting, publishing with that purpose a pamphlet under the title of "Establishment for Painting" (printed in Roustchouk in 1867). He painted portraits, and, in the palace of the Pasha of Roustchouk, he illustrated a Turkish history of the Janissaries. And yet, when Bulgaria had regained her political freedom, instead of availing himself of the seemingly more favourable conditions in order to pursue the realisation of his long-cherished ideals, he preferred to become a simple school inspector for a period of seven years (1878-1885), believing that in this way he would be most useful to his country. If a genuine artist arrived at such a conclusion and willingly abandoned his fondest dreams,



what could the fine arts expect from the Government or the leaders of the nation, who were then faced with the task of organising a newly created State and training a people, weakened by five centuries of political servitude, to the use of freedom?

But although the various Bulgarian administrations had felt their main mission to consist in the organising of primary and secondary education, perhaps for that very reason, and because they performed their work well, they also rendered unconsciously the greatest service to art.

The curriculum of the secondary schools provided that drawing should be taught as an obligatory subject. There were not as yet many Bulgarians who had been trained for that particular work, while most of those who could have undertaken it were called to more important positions. The Bulgarian Government, under these circumstances, had no other choice than to bring from abroad teachers of drawing, just as it had done for other subjects. This practice was not only followed during the first years after the liberation of the Principality, but, as the dearth of native teachers continued to be felt long after the Government had begun to send young Bulgarians to study in the various European academies, and did not entirely disappear even after the State School of Painting had been opened in Sofia in 1896, recourse had still to be had to foreign teachers; with this difference, however, that after this latter school had begun to provide the secondary schools with drawing-masters, the foreign artists engaged by the Government were destined to serve as professors in the various departments of the School of Painting, especially those reserved for art industries. The school, although transformed in 1905 into an Academy, is as yet in its infancy, and the assistance of foreigners is still needed in those branches of art where native masters are lacking.

Besides the requirements of the educational establishments,



various other circumstances contributed to the influx into Bulgaria of foreign artists.

In 1885, during the Servo-Bulgarian war, several artists visited the Principality as military correspondents and artists for various illustrated papers, and were not content with merely sending war-sketches, but availed themselves of their sojourn in Bulgaria to borrow for their pictures subjects from Bulgarian history, scenery, and country life. Other foreigners came with the object of opening private schools for painting, or to try their luck, not as drawing-masters or State functionaries, but as free artists whose adventurous spirit had brought them to Bulgaria. The most important representative of this latter class of foreign artists who made Bulgaria their temporary home was Haïdoukevitch.

The foreign artists, those who had been invited by the Bulgarian Government as well as those who had come on their own account, brought with them an art which until then had no representatives in Bulgaria.

Before the liberation the only form of art that existed in Bulgaria was religious painting. This latter, however, had become so petrified into old, traditional Byzantine forms, and was carried on by people so ignorant and absolutely devoid of artistic taste or education, that the productions of this kind due to Vladislav Dospevsky (graduate of the Academies of Kiev, Odessa and St. Petersburg) stand quite apart, while the efforts of Nicolas Pavlovitch to reform icon-painting remained without any appreciable results. Besides the painting of icons, the best Bulgarian artists of that period—such as Vladislav Dospevsky and Nicolas Pavlovitch—worked also in portraiture, while the last-named did something in etching and historical painting.

These modest, if naïve and rather specialised, beginnings of fine art in Bulgaria unfortunately did not bear any im-



mediate fruits after the liberation of the Principality. One of the most gifted representatives of Bulgarian art at that time, Vladislav Dospevsky, although a Russian subject, was poisoned in a prison in Constantinople for acting as correspondent of European newspapers, while, as before stated, Nicolas Pavlovitch temporarily abandoned his artistic career in order to become a school inspector.

Failing to find in the young Principality any artistic soil or interest in the fine arts, the foreign artists, with very few exceptions, made only a brief stay there, and either returned to their native countries or sought better prospects elsewhere. They nevertheless contributed their share to the development of art in Bulgaria, not only as teachers and professors or as participators in the various artistic exhibitions which were organised by the State or under State patronage, but mainly by the productions which they left behind in the possession of the National Museum, the Prince, or private individuals.

As regards the development of art in Bulgaria, the most lasting influence has been exercised by those foreign artists whose pictures are preserved in the National Museum of Sofia, and are therefore most easily accessible to the public.

The Polish painter Piotrovsky, who first came to Bulgaria in 1885 as correspondent and artist of various illustrated newspapers—*The Graphic* among others—renewed his visit a little later and left in Bulgaria, besides his war-sketches and military pictures which are now the property of the Bulgarian Prince and of private persons, also his great picture, "The Massacre in Batak by the Bashi-bazouks in 1876." This production, notwithstanding the predominant and almost dazzling effect of the light from the burning village reflected in the river, shows a greater talent than any other picture in the Museum for rendering plastic feminine forms (for which the Bulgarians have not as yet a



very certain feeling) and draped masculine figures. It also displays great mastery in individualising crowds and in rendering events in a simple and easily comprehensible form: to the right—the burning village, Batak; to the left—mutilated, dying Bulgarians and the victors, covered with their cheap glory: Circassians, Bashi-bazouks, Turkish women and Tzigans, revelling in the dreadful spectacle presented by the burning village, the naked feminine forms, or occupied in dividing the booty.

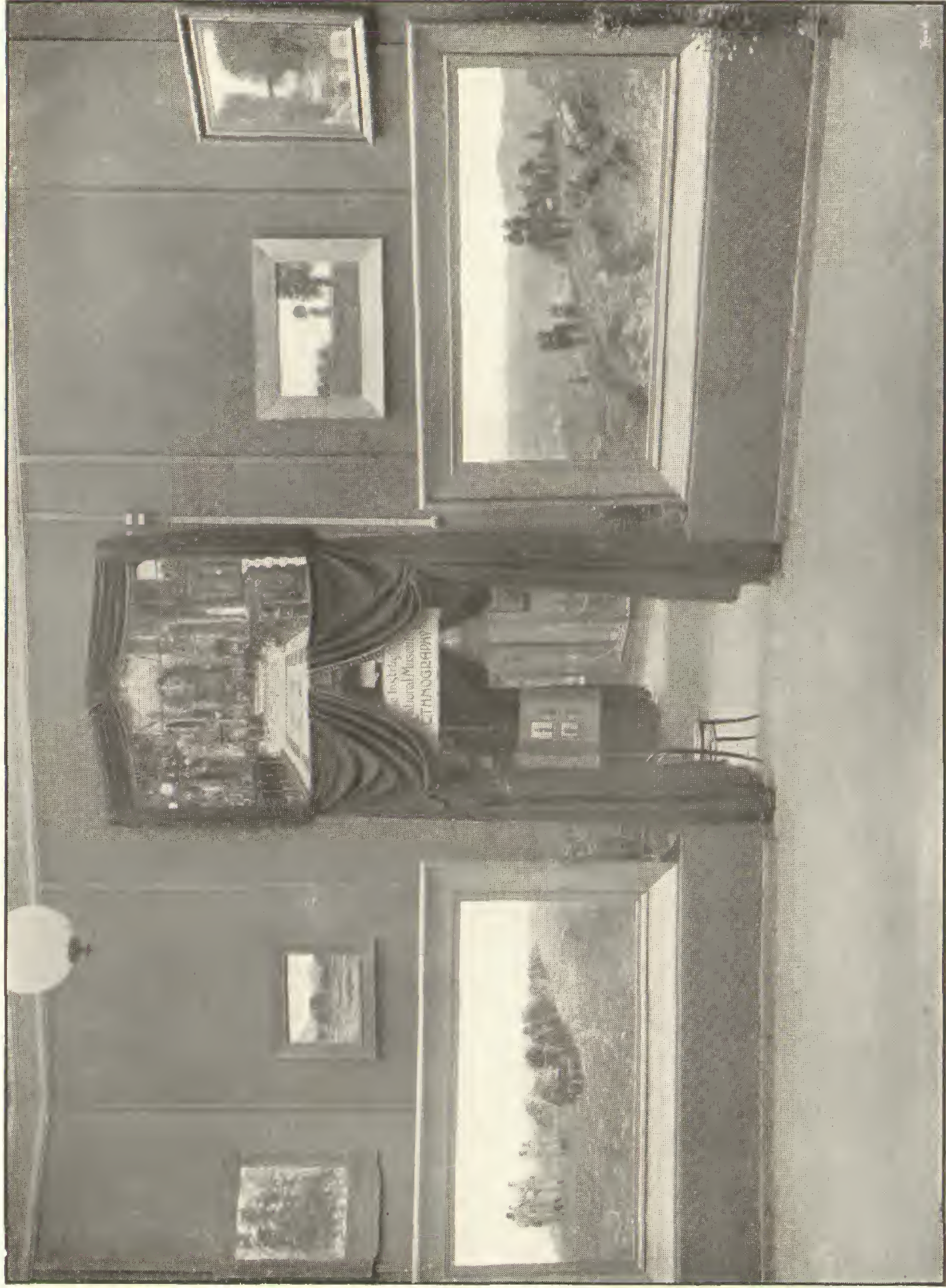
The Italian artist *Boloungaro*, who spent several years in Sofia as teacher in one of the high schools, in technique belongs to the Impressionist School. One of his best-known pictures represents evening falling over a Bulgarian landscape, and symbolised by a string of peasant carts descending a hill.

The Dalmatian Arndt, who spent a short time in Bulgaria as teacher in the Gynasium of Sofia, made a fine pen-drawing of the ruins of the Church of St. Sofia. The ancient building rises behind a Turkish street of low huts. The sobriety and the few technical means by which the artist renders the most typical elements of his subject place this pen-drawing far above all the other pictures dealing with the same theme.

The Frenchman de Fourcade, who was also a teacher in the Gymnasium of Sofia, figures in the National Museum with four pictures of Constantinople. In these pictures, which have had a considerable influence on young Bulgarian artists, de Fourcade appears a master in rendering graceful details, in freshness and warmth of colour, and in the lighting of houses, roads, human figures, and especially of trees and bushes, which, in the intermingling of brilliant light and shadow, have the appearance of bunches of fresh, green flowers.

Madame Sliapin, Russian, remained for a considerable time in Sofia as owner and manager of a private school of painting. Her pictures are in the Rembrandt style, and deal with typical Russian subjects such as "Passed like a Dream."





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The Tzech Holarek, who never visited Bulgaria, is represented in the National Museum by his great picture, full of tragic inspiration, "The Return of the Bulgarian Prisoners, blinded by Basil I, A.D. 1014." The grey winter landscape lit by the last rays of the setting sun, the pitiless snowstorm, the helplessness of the long line of mutilated soldiers losing itself in the distance, the weeping and the prostration of the blinded prisoners—all this makes of Holarek's picture a striking canvas-tragedy of human misery inflicted by human cruelty.

The statues of B. Shatz, for many years professor in the State School of Painting, are devoid of artistic merit, and have exercised no influence on Bulgarian sculpture.

Among the remaining foreigners who have resided temporarily in Bulgaria and have left their productions hanging in the collections of the Prince or of private individuals, only those who have taken part in the various art exhibitions need be mentioned here. They are: Ulrich, Canela, Petras, Madame Shatz, de François, Amzel, Kronberger, Oberbauer, Madame Goloubeva, Madame Hadji-Mikeff, etc. In the earliest exhibitions in Bulgaria, organised by the Prince or by other persons, besides the productions of the above foreign artists, pictures of various other Western artists were also exhibited. Thus, in one of these exhibitions which was organised by the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Art in Bulgaria, artists like Laslo, Angelli, Panzinger, Recuajel, de Brun, Lemaire, Aïvazovsky, Sudkovski, Leo Lerch, Hugo Birgel, Zeifert, and Bromberger were represented by one or more of their pictures.

As regards the development of artistic taste in Bulgaria, the importance of those foreign artists who made Bulgaria their temporary home, participating in the various exhibitions and leaving their productions in the Principality, can hardly be over-estimated. Some of them have served as models to rising Bulgarian talent. Thus, Alexander Bojinoff,



the well-known cartoonist, began his work as landscape painter with an imitation of one of de Fourcade's pictures. George Atanasoff, another promising artist and a graduate of the State School of Painting in Sofia, in his picture "Buffaloes" has undoubtedly been influenced by Boloungaro's picture "Evening." But far more decisive has been the influence on Bulgarian art of those foreigners who were naturalised and remained permanently in Bulgaria. Together with the young Bulgarians who had studied abroad, principally in Munich, Florence, Paris, Rome, Turin, and Prague or in the Sofia School of Painting, they have done practically everything for the artistic education of the Bulgarian public and for raising art in Bulgaria to its present level.

## II

### ART EXHIBITIONS

THE slow and painful progress of artistic life in Bulgaria, and the gradual spreading of artistic taste among the Bulgarian public, will be best seen from a brief survey of the history of art exhibitions in Bulgaria.

The first art exhibition was organised in 1887 by Ivan Angeloff, teacher in the Gymnasium of Sofia and a graduate of the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. This exhibition, which contained three pictures painted in Bulgaria and a number of sketches and studies dating from the artist's student days in Munich, as well as drawings by students of the Gymnasium, was held in one of the drawing-rooms of the Gymnasium in honour of the Prince, who had recently been elected to the Bulgarian throne. Besides the royal visit, the exhibition only attracted the attention of a few personal friends of the artist.

Some five years later, on the occasion of the first Bulgarian



Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, held in Plovdiv in 1892, the first collective art exhibition was organised, the productions of the various Bulgarian artists, nearly all of whom were teachers in the gymnasium, being exhibited. The section of the exhibition in which, besides the above artists, Bulgarian students of painting and sculpture in the foreign art academies also participated, attracted so little attention that no printed catalogue of the work exhibited was ever issued. The only Bulgarian newspaper which noticed it was *Balkanska Zora*, where a long article appeared under the initial M., behind which probably was hidden some Bulgarian artist who was himself taking part in the exhibition. Even the organ of the administration of the exhibition, the object of which during its two years' publication was to inform the public concerning the progress of the exhibition and to acquaint it with the objects collected, makes no mention of the section where for the first time the works of the Bulgarian artists had been brought together. All that it contains on the subject is a brief notice dealing with the picture of Holarek, "The Return of the Bulgarian Prisoners blinded by Basil I., 1014."

This first exhibition of Bulgarian art, which did not entirely deserve the neglect with which it was treated, was followed in 1894 by another—the first independent art exhibition consisting of productions by members and non-members of the Association for Encouraging the Fine Arts in Bulgaria. This exhibition, as also those which followed in 1897, 1898, and 1899, was organised with the co-operation and the pecuniary assistance of the Government.

The first collective art exhibition without any moral or material assistance from the Government was that organised by the Society of Modern Art, and held in 1904. This society, which was formed in 1903, has shown from the very first, and continues to show, a great, almost feverish activity. It has



already organised, at its own risk and with its private resources, three exhibitions of the productions of all its members, and seven exhibitions of pictures by individual members. Besides, the Society of Modern Art, as also the Society of Bulgarian Artists, took part in the first Southern Slav Art Exhibition, which was held in Belgrade in 1904, while during the months of August and September, 1906, it organised the second Southern Slav Art Exhibition in Sofia. On this last occasion the Society of Modern Art was helped by the State, both morally and materially.

With the awakening and development of artistic interest and taste in Bulgaria, the moral success of Bulgarian art was assured, and material encouragement and prosperity were not slow to follow. This last was to some extent true even of the earliest exhibition, that organised by Ivan Angeloff, only the buyer then was not a Bulgarian, but a foreigner, a Slav, who had been captivated by the genuine Bulgarian subjects of pictures like that of the "Ruins of St. Sophia" and the views of the village of Slivnitsa, and of Sofia as it appeared in its Turkish character, before the new planning of the town had been carried into effect.

The first purchases of pictures by the State for the National Museum date from 1892, and were made during the Commercial Industrial Exhibition in Plovdiv. The most generous buyer of productions of art is the Prince, who owns the richest art collection in Bulgaria. The purchases by the Prince, the Government, or by private persons have increased with each succeeding exhibition. There have been cases where all the pictures exhibited were sold. This happened during the first exhibition organised by the Society of Modern Art in 1904, and at the private exhibition of Alexander Bojinoff and Peter Morozoff in 1906. For the purpose of acquiring pictures and statuary figuring in the second Southern Slav Art Exhibition held in Sofia last year and in the exhibition



organised at the same time by the Society of Bulgarian Artists on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the State School of Painting, the Prince spent a sum of 35,000 francs, while the Government granted a credit of 25,000 francs.

The orders given by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities have done almost as much for the development of the fine arts in Bulgaria as the purchasers of pictures at the various exhibitions. Dr. Iv. Shishmanoff, while editor of the *Magazine for Popular Recreation, Science and Literature*, published by the Ministry of Public Instruction, in his desire to collect and preserve materials for the Bulgarian ethnography by the reproduction of various national types in their picturesque and decorative costumes, of the remains of ancient Bulgarian architecture, and of implements of home industries, entrusted this task to various artists, and chiefly to Iv. Markvitchka. They were to prepare a series of pictures of national, and principally of peasant costumes, so that the national dress might be preserved, at least in the pages of the *Sbornik*, from total disappearance, with which modern conditions of life threatened them. On the initiative of Constantin Velitchkoff, Minister of Public Instruction, in 1896 the Cabinet Council decided to offer to the Tsar Nicholas II., on the occasion of his coronation, an album of Bulgarian pictures dealing with purely Bulgarian subjects, such as national types and scenery, landscapes, revolutionaries from the pre-liberation period, Bulgarian and Turkish architecture, ruins, etc. About twenty artists worked for this album, and prepared sixty-two pictures. In 1902 Dragan Tzankoff, as President of the National Assembly, entrusted to Nicolas Mihailoff the painting of the portraits of all the former Presidents of the Sobranje, which are now hung in the library of the National Assembly. The Central Administration of the Bulgarian Agricultural Bank commissioned Ivan Markvitchka and Anton Mitoff to decorate the ceiling and the walls of the



Council Hall of the Bank with frescoes whose subjects were taken from national life. The Prince, the commission to which was entrusted the transformation of the former mosque "Tcherna Djamia" into the Orthodox church "Sveti Sedmotchislenitzi," the Holy Synod which superintended the building of the Theological Seminary in Sofia and the adjoining church, the Committee "Tsar Liberator" which raised the Mausoleum commemorating the Russian soldiers who were killed during the siege of Plevna, as well as private persons belonging to the Sofia parishes of St. Sofia and St. Sedmotchislenitzi—have all placed orders with the State School of Painting for icons to be hung in the different churches and chapels, the work being executed by the professors and students of the school, and mainly by Ivan Markvitchka, Anton Mitoff, and Stephan Ivanoff. The repairing of old churches and the building of new ones bring in orders for icons, which are no more imported from Russia but are painted by Bulgarian artists.

Such artistic treasures as are to be found at present in Bulgaria are preserved in places easily accessible to the general public, as the National Museum, the Central Offices of the Bulgarian Agricultural Bank, the Library and the Central Hall of the National Assembly, the walls of the latter being decorated with portraits by Nicolas Mihailoff of the Tsar Liberator, the first Bulgarian Prince, Alexander, the reigning Prince, the first Bulgarian Princess, Maria Louisa, the Heir-apparent, Prince Boris, a group of the royal children, as well as with an icon of the Bulgarian Saints Cyril and Methodius, by Anton Mitoff. We may further mention the churches of Saint Sofia and of Sveti Sedmotchislenitzi, the chapel of the Theological Seminary of Sofia, and the Mausoleum of Plevna, which all possess specimens of modern Bulgarian icon-painting.

The richest artistic collection in Bulgaria is owned by the



Prince, the pictures being distributed among the various royal residences in Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna, and in the royal villas at Sitniakovo, district of Samokov, and at Joroublianĭ, near Sofia. A certain number of productions by Bulgarian artists have found their way abroad, and are now the property of various museums and private persons. Foreigners who have lived in Bulgaria also own pictures by Bulgarian artists. The Prince has more than once presented pictures to the Regiment of Minsk (Russia) whose honorary colonel he is, to his relatives, and to members of the diplomatic body. At the first Southern Slav Art Exhibition held in Belgrade, in which members of the two Bulgarian societies, "Modern Art" and "Bulgarian Artists," took part, King Peter of Servia acquired for his palaces several works by members of these societies, while the Servian Government bought a certain number of Bulgarian pictures for the Servian National Museum, the example being also followed by some private persons. At the Universal Exhibition of Liège (Belgium) in 1905 several productions by Bulgarian artists, more especially those which attracted attention with their Oriental or Bulgarian subjects, were bought by foreign collectors. The picture galleries of Prague, Cologne, etc., own pictures by Jaroslav Veshin. These pictures deal with Bulgarian topics, and were painted after Veshin had settled in Bulgaria and obtained his naturalisation. There are two Bulgarian artists—Binembaum and Paxin, both of them graduates of the Academy of Munich—who live permanently abroad, the latter being a regular contributor to *Simplicissimus* of Munich and to the now extinct *Der liebe Augustin* of Vienna.

The appreciable success which has attended the various art exhibitions, and the growing number of orders given by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, deprive the Bulgarian artists of any right to complain of indifference on the part of public opinion in Bulgaria towards the fine arts; the more



so as some of the exhibitions and the execution of many of the orders given were not such as to justify even the moderate expectations of a society whose artistic taste is not as yet distinguished by its exactness.

### III

#### IMITATION AND FOREIGN INFLUENCE

DURING the first years after the liberation of the Principality the foreign artists who had been called to Bulgaria, and the Bulgarians who had graduated at the various European academies of fine arts, found no trace of an art which could be said to meet the requirements of the time. But in return they discovered an abundance of subjects which were quite new to them: wild and romantic scenery which the peasants' imagination had peopled with mythical beings, and heroes whose memory still survived in legends and in the national songs which had not as yet been affected by the new conditions of life. Original architecture, preserved in the towns and villages, and interesting both in its general character and in picturesque details, offered tempting attractions to the artist. There were also the various national types in their curious costumes—Bulgarians, Turks, Gypsies and the other Oriental nationalities. The country was covered with ruins of old churches and fortifications bearing evidence of the ravages of time and an indifferent population. If we add the fresh recollections from the revolutionary period and from the unequal struggle with the national oppressors, we get a good idea of the rich subjects and materials which were still waiting for artistic treatment.

Neither were the artists slow to avail themselves of these favourable conditions. Those among them who had lived in Bulgaria, or who, without visiting the country, took an





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interest in its history and inhabitants, found in these a plentiful supply of new themes for their inspiration. Thus we find Holarek, some of whose pictures have been acquired by the State and are now the property of the Bulgarian National Museum, going to Bulgarian history of the eleventh century and taking as subject for his best-known picture an episode from the momentous struggle of the Bulgarian King Samuel with the Greek Emperor Basil I., known also under the name of the "Killer of the Bulgarians," in consequence of his order for the blinding of 11,000 Bulgarian soldiers taken captive. Piotrovsky, in his picture "The Massacre by the Bashi-bazouks," has borrowed his subject from recent Bulgarian history—the atrocities committed in 1876 by Bashi-bazouks, Gypsies, and Turkish irregulars which filled Europe, and especially England, with horror, and first raised the question of bettering the lot of the oppressed Bulgarians. In the same way Boloungaro, in his picture "Evening," represents a Bulgarian landscape with peasants, while Arndt treats the ruin of "St. Sofia" and the adjoining Turkish quarter in winter.

Great as the part played by foreign artists in the development of the fine arts in Bulgaria has been, it was not of the same decisive importance as that which fell to the artists who, although born and educated abroad, had made Bulgaria their permanent home. It was to these latter, helped by young Bulgarian artists, and not to the migratory birds to whom the Principality was never more than a temporary nest, that fell the hard task, rendered doubly difficult in the absence of any encouragement, of solving the most trying of all problems—viz. to reconcile the outer forms of art with the spirit of the new subjects which offered themselves to the artist's inspiration. The past history of Bulgarian art, as also its present phase, may be said to consist of an incessant struggle between the subject treated and the form of its treatment. The struggle



has been immensely complicated owing to the stereotyped Western mannerisms in vogue among Bulgarian artists and the absence among them of a sufficiently strong individuality to raise them above the limitations of traditional patterns. This state of things is no more than might have been expected under the given circumstances. With the exception of Yaroslav Veshin, who had fully matured his talent before he settled in Bulgaria, the remaining Bulgarian artists—the few foreign ones included—had only just completed their professional education, and had hardly yet had time to divest themselves of the tyranny of foreign examples and to develop any distinct individuality of their own. What the academies in which they had studied failed to give them had to be acquired after their return to Bulgaria, and was only secured by persistent effort. In course of time the older artists succeeded in shaking off the chains of traditional style, while the younger school gradually freed itself from the domination of foreign influences. Considerable as was the success of that effort at emancipation, there has been thus far no talent sufficiently strong to create a style of its own or to win for itself an acknowledged place as innovator.

The evolution of the spirit and methods of Bulgarian art has been clearly reflected in the various art exhibitions which have been held in recent years, and can also be traced in the pictures in the National Museum in Sofia.

During the earlier period the traditional patterns which stereotyped nearly all artistic productions appear the more noticeable since they were accompanied by an uncertain and defective technique. The pictures belonging to this class betray a somewhat vulgar taste both in conception and rendering of the subjects treated. The sense of outline, movement, colour and atmosphere, as well as command of grouping, have never been strong points with Bulgarian artists. Their models lack individuality, and bear a close resemblance to one



another, the attention of the artists being mainly engrossed in faithfully reproducing the smallest details of the various national costumes. The human figures, instead of being alive, look like draped wax statues. This predominance of the purely ethnographical element over colour and movement is specially striking in large compositions such as peasant weddings, dances, markets, etc., in nearly all of which the over-elaboration of the secondary details is at the expense of the living element. Nature and the human figure are never treated for their own sake, but only serve to illustrate some ethnographical side or to produce a desired effect. The same may be said even of portraits, especially of royal personages, officers, and fashionable ladies. The face, for some of the artists, seems a matter of secondary importance; what preoccupies them is to render every insignificant detail of uniform or toilette, even those which are almost invisible to the naked eye. This tendency to minuteness in detail is equally noticeable in the faces, many of which seem to have taken on the official air of the uniforms.

Bulgarian artists have been hitherto more exposed to the danger of pandering to vulgar conventionalities and types than to that of succumbing to foreign influences. Success, both moral and material, was most easily gained by stereotyping the low tastes of the public, and to this temptation of winning cheap glory the higher interests of art have more than once been sacrificed.

The influence of foreign masters is principally noticeable with the younger artists, and has made itself more especially felt during recent years. Among the older artists, *Ivan Angeloff* belongs to the school of Millet, whose influence is visible in his pictures of peasant life. The artist who has shown himself most susceptible to foreign influence is undoubtedly *Nicolas Mihaïloff*. His compositions "Krali Marko," "Nymphs and Dragons," bear unmistakable signs



of Arnold Böcklin, Franz Stuck, and Ludvig von Hoffmann, while in his portraits he has been influenced in turn by Lenbach, Habermann, Stuck, and F. A. von Kaulbach.

Another young artist, *Alexander Montajoff*, has been at different periods under the influence of such different and very often opposed masters as Böcklin, Max Zilbermann, Graf von Kolkreuth, and Segantini. *Anna Hodina*, in her Munich landscapes, is influenced by the Jugendstil and by the group known as Die Scholle. *Alexander Bojinoff* has been influenced at different periods by the works of different masters, and the same may be also said of the decorative artist *Haralampi Tatcheff*.

In speaking of the influence of foreign masters on Bulgarian artists, it should be added that in most cases it is but of brief duration. With their return to their country Bulgarian artists gradually shake off the yoke of foreign influence, and this they accomplish the more easily as there are in Bulgaria few, if any, masterpieces of the great European artists.

#### IV

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF BULGARIAN ART

THE art gallery of the National Museum in Sofia, which has now been in existence for nearly twenty years, hardly gives the visitor, especially the foreign one, a true idea of the present state of art in Bulgaria. This gallery was intended to promote the æsthetic education of the nation by collecting together and bringing within easy reach of the public the best productions of Bulgarian art. With this object the Government periodically purchased the works of Bulgarian artists at the various art exhibitions. The earliest State purchases were made between 1892, the date of the



first Bulgarian National Exhibition, and 1899, when the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Art in Bulgaria held its last exhibition. Then followed a period of seven years, during which no additions were made to the art gallery of the National Museum. The loss which resulted to the gallery was the greater, as these few years coincide with one of the most active stages in the development of Bulgarian art. The Society of Contemporary Art alone organised during that period four general and seven "one-man" exhibitions, many of the pictures exhibited deserving to be added to the collection of the National Museum. The State, however, abstained from making any purchases, because the Museum was then being enlarged and had not yet been officially opened. The opening took place in 1905, since when the Government has returned to the original practice of enriching the art gallery by periodical purchases of new pictures.

Owing to these gaps, the picture gallery of the National Museum is of small assistance to the student in striving to determine the principal characteristics of Bulgarian art. Of far greater importance for that purpose are the art exhibitions which have been held during recent years in Sofia or abroad, and where Bulgarian art has been well represented both in quality and quantity. This is especially true of those exhibitions in which the artists belonging to both Bulgarian art societies have participated at the same time. There have been hitherto two such occasions: in 1904, during the first Southern Slav Art Exhibition, held in Belgrade, and in 1906, when the members of the Society of Art took part in the second Southern Slav Art Exhibition held in Sofia, while the Society of Bulgarian Artists organised an independent exhibition of the works of its members.

For the purpose of the present chapter, the Belgrade Exhibition offers far greater interest, not only because on that occasion the Bulgarian artists figured with better-selected



productions, but also, and mainly, because the juxtaposition of these latter with the works of Croatians, Slovenians, and Servians brought into more striking prominence the characteristic traits of Bulgarian art.

The four nationalities which took part in these exhibitions may be classed into two groups, Croatians and Slovenians forming the first, while the Servians and the Bulgarians formed the second. The most striking feature of the works of the Croatian and Slovenian artists was their form and technique. There can be little doubt that this peculiarity is due to the political condition of these two nationalities, neither of which exists as an independent political unit. Both Croatians and Slovenians are engaged in a racial struggle with the predominant German element in the Austro-Hungarian Empire—a struggle which is reflected in all the departments of their national life, art not excluded. They realise that, if they are not to be worsted in this struggle, they must not prove themselves inferior to their rivals in those respects where the latter most excel, the more so as in the case of neither of these two nationalities have form and technique been transmitted traditionally or been evolved on independent historical lines.

In contrast with Slovenians and Croatians, the distinctive feature of the productions of Servian and Bulgarian artists seems to reside in their contents rather than in the form. As representatives of free nations, they are not under the necessity of fighting for the right of existence, and in matters of art they have done as they did in other branches of their national activity: they borrowed from other nations such forms as did not exist at home, and gave them a national content. Owing to this circumstance, we find both in Servians and Bulgarians a lack of equilibrium and unity between the form and the subjects treated.

As regards form, of the four nationalities the Croatians



have undoubtedly attained to the highest degree of perfection. The works of nearly all of their artists were distinguished by the masterly combination of line, light, colour, perspective, and composition. What differentiated the work of the various artists was that some of them seemed to place form above content; others strove to realise a perfect equilibrium between the two elements; while yet others appeared to sacrifice form in order to lay greater stress on the subject. But although among the last two categories of Croatian artists there are some who can be classed under the Impressionist, or even the Neo-impressionist School, it is not the Croats but the Slovenians who appear as negators of the old forms of Western art. Nearly all the best Slovenian artists are Neo-impressionists who have broken all connection with historical and imaginative painting, and limit the choice of their subjects to nature and human figures, as they appear in *plein air*.

The Servians, on the other hand, form an antithesis both as regards form and subjects. All their artists appear as imitators of classical or modern masters—such as Murillo, Rembrandt and others. They borrow their subjects almost exclusively from Servian history, and appeal, not to Servian nature or national life, which are almost entirely neglected by them, but to the patriotic feelings of the Servians. The golden period of the ancient Servian kingdom, its fall under the Turks, the sufferings of the Servian nation under the Turkish yoke, the struggles for liberty, and their recent political history—all these events have been used to the full by Servian artists. Chauvinists in all things, they appear the same in the province of art.

Bulgarian art has no point of contact with Croatian art. Its resemblance to Slovenian art consists in the democratic tendency, common to them both, to borrow their subjects from local scenery and local types. In technique, however,



the difference between them is as wide as between Bulgarians and Croatians. Compared with Servian art, the Bulgarian differs most widely from the latter in the character of its subjects. The prominence given by Servian artists to patriotic subjects is entirely absent from the works of Bulgarians. As regards form, it must be owned that the Servians are superior to Bulgarians, as they are also in their comparative freedom from traditional styles. In first-rate artists the Servians stand higher than the Bulgarians, who have not as yet produced talent equal to Marko Murat and Païa Jovanovitch. In one respect, however, Bulgarian art is superior not only to Servian but also Croatian and Slovenian art—viz. portraiture.

If we exclude historical painting, which, since the early and specialised attempts of Nicolas Pavlovitch, has been almost entirely neglected in Bulgaria, Bulgarian artists have tried their hand at almost every form of art. Ethnographical pictures, national scenes, pictures of military subjects, landscapes, interiors, flower pieces, animals, portraits, icons, allegories, mythical subjects, ruins, architecture—all these are fully represented in the art gallery of the National Museum, and have figured in nearly all the art exhibitions. The first place among these varieties is held by landscapes, *genre*, and portraits, whether in oil, water-colour, or pastel. The weak point of Bulgarian artists is undoubtedly undraped figures, especially undraped feminine figures, the only exception being Stephan Ivanoff, who however abandoned this class of work to become the best icon-painter in Bulgaria.

Bulgarian art may be called national only as regards its contents, but neither in form nor technique. As we have already said, the subjects are taken from Bulgarian scenery or from peasant and town life. The sense of human form is gradually developing, with the exception of the feminine body, which remains proscribed by public taste. This last





VARIOUS MAPS IN RELIEF AND PRINCE'S PALACE, SOFIA.







circumstance accounts, to a great extent, for the low level of sculpture in Bulgaria. Decorative art is making rapid strides, owing to the great amount of building going on during recent years. Artistic form and technique are in a transitional phase, all the younger artists waging war against the traditional and conventional styles and the foreign influences that have hitherto hindered the free development of art in Bulgaria, and striving to evolve forms more in conformity with the contents of Bulgarian art.

## V

## SOCIETIES, SCHOOLS OF PAINTING, ARTISTS

THE artists of Bulgaria, foreign settlers included, are grouped into two societies : the Society of Bulgarian Artists, and the Society of Modern Art. These two societies live in perpetual strife with one another, each denying the right of existence to its rival, and extolling its own merits at the expense of its opponent. The truth, however, is that both of them have rendered appreciable services to art in Bulgaria.

The Society of Bulgarian Artists, which was originally known as the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Art in Bulgaria, comprised, before the foundation of the Society of Modern Art, not only all the artists in Bulgaria, but also a considerable proportion of the drawing-masters. With the pecuniary and moral support of the Government, it organised between 1894 and 1899 four exhibitions of the productions of the Bulgarian artists. Then followed seven years of inactivity, broken in 1906 by another exhibition to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the School of Painting in Sofia. The merits of this society consist not only in organising these exhibitions, interceding with the Government, and obtaining orders for pictures or icons destined for various churches or other



State institutions, but also, and mainly, in the initiative taken by it, on the suggestion of the Bulgarian Prince, which led to the founding of the first State School of Painting.

In 1887 the Prince, in a conversation with the artist Ivan Angeloff, who had organised in the Prince's honour an exhibition of his works, expressed readiness to take under his patronage a School of Arts, provided the idea of opening such a school found acceptance with the Government and the nation. Angeloff communicated this to the well-known Bulgarian writer, politician and artist, Constantin Velitchkoff, who at that time was living in Rome as a political exile. In 1894 Velitchkoff returned to Bulgaria, and shortly afterwards became Minister of Public Instruction and honorary president of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Art in Bulgaria. The president of the Society, Dr. Schishmanoff, together with two of its members, Ivan Markvitchka and Anton Mitoff, had meanwhile been studying the practical side of the question of opening a school of painting, and solicited the co-operation of the new minister. In 1895 the National Assembly passed a law creating a State school of painting in Sofia, which was opened in October 1896. The object of the school was to prepare (*a*) students of plastic and fine arts; (*b*) teachers of painting, drawing, calligraphy, and manual work in the gymnastic and special schools; (*c*) artists for the various art industries (icon-painting, wood-carving, decorative art, ceramics, weaving, goldsmith's work, etc.). In accordance with this object, the following subjects were taught during the year 1905-6: drawing from plaster models (class of Klissoureff), drawing from nature (class of Ivan Angeloff), painting (class of Ivan Markvitchka), sculpture (class of Yetcho Spiridonoff), decorative arts (class of Boris Mihailoff), wood-carving (class of Ivan Travnitzki), weaving and lace-making (class of Tereza Holekova), ceramics (class of Stephan Dimitroff), lithography (class of Joseph Silaba), history of



art, perspective, anatomy, architecture, etc. During that same year the State School of Painting had 126 students, of whom 100 were men and 26 women.

The School of Painting is the connecting link between the two Art Societies in Bulgaria, the leading members of the older Society of Bulgarian Artists being professors in the school, while the founders and members of the new Society of Modern Art are mainly old students.

The latter, together with other young artists who had graduated at the various academies abroad, formed the Society of Modern Art as a counterpoise to the Society of Bulgarian Artists, with which they were discontented owing to its inactivity and tutelage, as well as for its monopoly of all the State and Church orders. These were, however, not the only considerations which contributed to the starting of the new society. The avowed object of the Society of Modern Art, which originally existed only as a group of friends, was and remains as follows: (1) to bring together the various artists (architects, painters, sculptors, decorative artists), art critics and, in general, lovers of art, for the purpose of their mutual improvement and help; (2) to familiarise the public with modern art; (3) to study the origins of Bulgarian art, and to adapt what remains of it to modern conditions; (4) to ameliorate the material conditions of artistic work in Bulgaria. The society, which counts at present some scores of active members, was founded in 1907 by three architects, a decorative artist, an art critic, three painters, and a wood-carver. The persons who ushered it into life, as will be seen, belonged to various branches of art, and had been brought together in the natural course of their several professions. They held in common certain principles, the most important of which was that the time had come to react against the conventional styles in which Bulgarian art had been stereotyped, and to stimulate artistic life in



Bulgaria by acquainting it with the most recent artistic movements abroad. Innovators though they were in some respects, they did not lose sight of the local and national conditions in which Bulgarian art was placed, and, while holding an open mind to the lessons inculcated by the more advanced art of Western Europe, they were determined to retain and encourage what was typically national in Bulgarian art. All these ends which the Society of Modern Art set before itself had nothing new in themselves, but they were for the first time taken in earnest, and propagated by means of art exhibitions, which finished by awakening public interest in art. This was the more desirable as the rival Society of Bulgarian Artists had entirely neglected this side of the question, engrossed as its members were in executing hurriedly, and not very carefully, the various public orders with which they had been commissioned.

Among the members of the older society the first place must be assigned to Ivan Markvitchka, Anton Mitoff, and Ivan Angeloff.

*Ivan Markvitchka*, who is by nationality a Tzech, came to Bulgaria as early as 1882, or shortly after the liberation of the Principality. In the course of his now already long career in his adopted country he has rendered signal service to Bulgarian art. Markvitchka was the first to organise the teaching of drawing and painting as obligatory subjects in the programme of the Bulgarian secondary schools, and to him mainly was entrusted the choice of the foreign teachers of drawing. He was among the most prominent organisers of the art section at the National Exhibition held in 1892, as well as of the art gallery attached to the National Museum in Sofia, not to mention the part played by him in the founding of the first art society in Bulgaria and in the opening of the School of Painting. In addition to all this, he has been one of the most prolific contributors to the different art ex-



hibitions, and the busiest artist with State and private orders. Having begun as a mere teacher of drawing, Markvitchka has succeeded, by dint of labour and by untiring perseverance, in becoming President of the Society of Bulgarian Artists, Director of the State School of Painting, member of the Archæological Commission of the Ministry of Public Instruction, etc. Owing to the peculiar conditions in which art in Bulgaria was placed during the earlier years, Markvitchka has, in the course of his career, cultivated in turn nearly every variety of art. There is hardly any form of painting at which he has not tried his hand. He has laid under contribution every subject offered by Bulgarian scenery, Bulgarian life, or the revolutionary period (pre-liberation period and the recent Macedonian revolution). His pictures are to be found everywhere: in the royal palaces, in private houses, in the National Museum, in various churches and public offices. Educated at the Academy of Prague, he acquired his real artistic training in Bulgaria by means of incessant work and by running through the whole scale of subjects: altars, graphical sketches of Bulgarian peasants, scenes of peasant life, illustrations of novels, decorative painting, portraiture, icons for Orthodox churches, etc. The feeling which he puts into his pictures varies from the sentimentalism of moonlit nights to tragedy, as reflected in his Macedonian pictures. It must, however, be admitted that the talent of Markvitchka, unquestionable though it be, is not quite so many-sided as his repertory, neither has it always been equal to the problems with which he had to deal. In his *genre* pictures the ethnographical element is always at the expense of the contents. His icons never seem to render the typically Bulgarian religious feeling; his landscapes abound in artificial effects, his tragic pictures in rather sickly sentimentalism. Even his portraits, wherein he excels, seem to suffer from a certain unnatural elevation in the expression of the face,



which has nothing in common with the real person. Absorbed as Markvitchka has been in incessant and exhaustive work during the best part of the last quarter of a century, he has not had sufficient opportunity to thoroughly perfect his technique in order to cope more successfully with the difficulties of the variety of subjects which the special conditions of artistic life in Bulgaria have hitherto forced upon him.

But, however well founded these criticisms are, whatever the opposition which the work of Markvitchka provokes among the foreign artists and art critics, it is recognised on all hands that the services which he has rendered to art in Bulgaria are surpassed by few, if any, other artists.

Not less active than Markvitchka, though hardly so many-sided, is his companion and friend *Anton Mitoff*, a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. He has been associated with Markvitchka in nearly all the artistic undertakings, old and new—art societies, foundation of the School of Painting, organisation of the Museum, exhibitions, execution of State and private orders. He paints national types, landscapes, town and village subjects, portraits, and icons. In his case also the ethnographical element holds the first place. He revels in details, closely imitates modern Russian and ancient Italian masters in his icons, and may be said to be the chief representative of a conventional impressionism which depends for its effects on an artificial contrast between light and shade. Although a born fighter, and the most militant member of the old society, he does not display in his pictures any tendency to cope with difficulties, but prefers easy subjects which do not tax the artist's inventiveness and require no originality in their treatment.

The best artist of the Society of Bulgarian Artists is *Ivan Angeloff*, who has studied in Munich and in Rome. He was the first Bulgarian artist to make use of the peasant, especially in his field-work. In contrast with Markvitchka,



Mitoff, and scores of others, Angeloff gives a secondary place to the ethnographical element, and is always preoccupied with rendering the artistic side of his subject. His pictures of this kind bear unmistakable signs of the influence of the French master Millet. In his pictures of town life he imitates the Italian conventional artists, while at one time he was under the influence of Segantini. Angeloff's principal merit is that he understands the spirit of Bulgarian peasant life, and succeeds in imparting it to his pictures, which are psychological as well as artistic productions. Angeloff is an impressionist in his methods, but has a distinctly personal technique. What his pictures seem to suffer from is lack of air and movement. Neither is he always successful in individualising faces, or in bringing them into unison with their surroundings.

Of the remaining artists of the old school, the majority belong to the conventional type (for example, Petko Klissouff) or are imitators of foreign masters (for instance, Boris Mihailoff). The name of *Otto Horeisha* (Terek) deserves a mention apart. One of the first among the foreign artists to settle in Bulgaria, he may be said to be the best Bulgarian painter of quiet, melancholy scenery, the battlefields of the last Russo-Turkish war having furnished him with subjects for some of his best compositions—"Russian Cemetery at the Peak of St. Nicolas," "On Shipka, Twenty-five Years After." The execution of these otherwise excellent subjects suffers from a certain conventionality in the treatment.

However great may have been the antagonism between the two art societies at first, it was not permanent, at least in the case of some members of the younger society, who, either owing to disagreements with their associates or to friendly relations with the old artists, ended by returning to the latter group. The most prominent of these seceders are *Christo Berberoff* and *Stephan Ivanoff*.



*Berberoff*, who graduated at the Academy of Turin, is under the influence of Segantini. He is principally a landscape painter, and prefers mountain scenery. His pictures are elevated in tone, the cloud and air effects are cleverly rendered, and the technique is always impressive.

*Stephan Ivanoff*, a graduate of the Sofia School of Painting, is one of the best Bulgarian impressionists, and undoubtedly the best icon-painter. Undraped figures, especially feminine figures, play an important part in his works. In this respect he stands almost alone among Bulgarian artists.

The younger of the two societies, that of Modern Art, counts more members than the Society of Bulgarian Artists. Thus in 1906, at the time of the second Southern Slav Art Exhibition, it had thirty-seven exhibitors, as against twenty-three exhibitors of the older society, which had at the same time organised an exhibition to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Sofia School of Painting.

The members of the Society of Modern Art are, with one or two exceptions, young men educated abroad, principally in Germany, or in the Sofia School of Painting. Those of them who had studied abroad came back dominated by all kinds of foreign influences, which, however, only proved of short duration. The graduates of the Sofia School of Painting, on the contrary, began their career as imitators of the conventional styles acquired from their teachers. But here also the influence did not last very long. The trait common to them all is their love of nature as she is, and not as she appears through the prism of traditional mannerisms.

The best as well as the oldest artist belonging to this class, although not a member of the Society of Modern Art, is *Jaroslav Veshin*, who, like Markvitchka, is by nationality a Tzech. Veshin was educated in Prague and Munich, where he had made a name before he came to Bulgaria, first as teacher in a gymnasium, and afterwards as professor in the





PICTURE AND CERAMIC PRODUCTIONS, SCHOOL OF ART, SOFIA.







School of Painting. Owing to misunderstandings with his colleagues, he left the school to become the official artist of the Court and War Office. He is beyond doubt the leading artist of Bulgaria, his productions figuring in some of the best European picture galleries, while his pupils are among the most promising of the young artists. His favourite subjects seem to be Bulgarian scenery, especially winter landscapes, old Turkish quarters, gypsies, and hunting-scenes. As regards artistic form and technique he has no equal in Bulgaria. His superiority in this respect is manifest even in his official pictures (parades, manoeuvres), in which the artistic element is at the expense of the showy side. In his *genre* pictures, especially in his types of peasants, gypsies, and Turks, he introduces a sense of humour quite personal to himself. With his well-established style Veshin has exercised a profound influence on all his pupils, especially on the most gifted among them, *Mihoff*, who is the best landscape painter of the Bulgarian Impressionist School. Mihoff treats every side of his subjects with equal interest and seriousness; he renders Nature in all her most essential features, and works in bright, fresh colours. Both in harmony and in composition the pictures of Mihoff are real works of art.

Another pupil of Veshin, and a member of the Society of Modern Art, is *Nicola Petroff*, one of the best Bulgarian water-colour painters. He has studied nature very closely, and generally succeeds in rendering the essential parts of his subject by simple yet suggestive means. His pictures are of village streets, clusters of trees, huts reflected in water, the banks of the Danube in the neighbourhood of Widdin, some village fountain with a girl drawing water, country lanes—all distinguished by the same delicate and sure touch.

While Mihoff and Petroff are nearly always successful in adapting their methods to the subjects treated, *Peter*



*Morozoff*, another graduate of the Sofia School of Painting (pupil of Markvitchka), stands as an example of the difficulties which often beset an artist in his endeavours to materialise his conceptions. In his earlier productions, which were exhibited in 1905, Morozoff appears as a symbolist to whom nature and her various manifestations are but a reflection of the artist's moods and aspirations. His most daring attempt in this line is the picture "The Nymphs' Hiding-place," in which, as also in some of his other compositions, Morozoff betrays the temperament of a poet rather than that of a plastic artist. The difficulties inherent to the form of art which first attracted Morozoff were, in his case, further enhanced by a conventional and not always sure technique. The moderate success which attended these early efforts soon decided Morozoff to abandon his symbolical conceptions of nature and to return to ordinary natural scenery—a revolution the more to be approved as many of his pictures betrayed an insufficient acquaintance with natural forms. In his recent landscapes nature, in the various seasons of the year, autumn by preference, appears pervaded by a symbolical meaning which gives her a character of unity. It must, however, be admitted that Morozoff does not always succeed in catching the essential elements of the scenery, neither is he free from a weakness for cheap effects. But if this detracts from the artistic merit of his pictures, it has proved an easy way of winning public approval and securing a profitable market for them. A stay of some months in Paris seems to have opened to Morozoff new vistas, and he has now taken to portraiture with the same enthusiasm which distinguished his former undertakings.

Among the remaining landscape painters—graduates of the Sofia School of Painting—*Marin Georgieff* is a pupil of Markvitchka, whose conventional style he seems to have contracted. He has met with considerable success in his



pictures of church ruins, ancient fortifications, interiors of old underground churches, and his copies of ancient Bulgarian frescoes. *Christo Kabaktchieff*, who has never been outside Bulgaria, belongs to the school of neo-impressionists, and sees nothing but colour in nature.

Of the landscape-painters who have studied abroad, *Haralampy Kieff* paints chiefly grand scenery, and *Kazandjieff* fields and peasants. The youngest member of this class is *Alexander Montajoff*, who is also the most promising. Montajoff rarely indulges in bright and cheerful subjects, his pictures in most cases proceeding from a melancholy inspiration. In his work he has been influenced in turn by Böcklin, Graf von Kalkreuth, Max Liebermann, and Segantini. These foreign influences, however, do not in the least detract from the merits of his landscapes. They were of passing character, and with his return to Bulgaria his artistic individuality has shaken them off, so that in his pictures which figured at the second Southern Slav Art Exhibition he appears as an independent artist, both as regards subject and technique.

*Mme Anna Josephoff* (née Hähn) has won for herself a name as the best painter of flowers, while *Mme Hadji-Mitcheff* (née Brown) is the only painter of miniatures in Bulgaria. This lady possesses a keen sense of line and delicate colouring, and a sure touch in rendering the details of hair and dress. Another woman artist, *Mme Naoumoff*, (née Ostroveka), is well known as portraitist, especially in pastel.

There are few Bulgarian artists who at one time or another have not tried their hand at portraiture. Among the older artists, Ivan Markvitchka obtained considerable success in this department, but the best Bulgarian portraitist is unquestionably *Nicolas Mihaïloff*. He has studied in Sofia, Munich, Paris, and London, and, before taking to portraiture,



spent a considerable time in copying old and modern masters. He also made an attempt at large compositions, taking his subjects from Bulgarian folklore. These pictures, which were not devoid of merit, especially in their colouring, were the result of the influence exerted on the young artist by such masters as Böcklin, Franz Stuck, and Ludwig von Hoffmann. The scenery and figures, and their general inspiration, had nothing Bulgarian about them. The influence of these Servian artists on Mihailoff may be easily traced, even in some of his later productions of the same kind. He appears much more personal and independent in his portraits, although here also the influence of Rubens, Lenbach, Stuck, Hubermann, and F. A. von Kaulbach was for a time manifest. As a portraitist Mihailoff has a distinct talent for catching the most characteristic side of a face and concentrating the expression in the eyes, as well as rendering everything that is typical of the subject. Much of the work of this talented artist, however, suffers in consequence of over-production, often at the expense of the execution. Among the best portraits of Mihailoff are those of his wife.

Unique of his kind as portraitist and caricaturist is *Alexander Bojinoff*, one of the most popular and most imitated artists, not only in Bulgaria but also among the other Southern Slav nations. Bojinoff has met with considerable success as poet, as feuilletonist, as symbolical painter, in landscape and in portraiture; but the general public associates him mainly, if not exclusively, with caricature, in which line he excels equally in inspiration and in execution. Bojinoff himself, however, conscious of this rather one-sided reputation, values highest his symbolical pictures and his landscapes. In his caricatures of public men, politicians, poets, writers, etc., Bojinoff is distinguished by rendering not only what is typical in the face, but also the mental or moral peculiarities and habits of the subject caricatured. The symbolical



pictures of Bojinoff are characterised by their spiritual conception. He seldom works in oils, preferring pastel, water-colour, and pen. This comparative neglect of oils is sufficiently accounted for by lack of time and other distractions with which a regular contributor to the daily press is beset. Bojinoff studied for a while at the School of Painting in Sofia. He has spent a considerable time in Munich, but never studied in the Academy there. All that he has been able to do as artist he owes to his hard work and perseverance.

The same may be also said of the best Bulgarian decorative artist, *Haralamby Tatcheff*, who graduated at the School of Painting in Sofia, where, however, he could not find a teacher worthy of his talent. He owes everything to private work and the study of the Western masters, and of nature. He is well acquainted with ancient Bulgarian and modern Bulgarian ornamentation, of which he has made free use in his work. Tatcheff is the first Bulgarian artist who has systematically worked on book-covers, vignettes, and glass-painting.

Sculpture in Bulgaria, owing to the somewhat puritanical attitude of Bulgarian public opinion towards undraped figures, remains in a very backward state. Of the two sculptors who, as students, gave considerable promise, *Marin Vassileff* has never been able to raise himself above the conventional style, while *Yetcho Spiridonoff*, with his unquestionable talent, has thus far produced very little.



